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STATEMENT BY

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UNITED STATES ARMY

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Chairman Ortiz, Ranking Member Forbes, distinguished Members of the House Committee on Armed Services. I thank you for the opportunity to appear here today to provide a status on the current readiness of U.S. ground forces. This is my first occasion to appear before this esteemed committee, and I pledge to always provide you with an honest and forthright assessment.

On behalf of our Secretary, the Honorable Pete Geren and our Chief of Staff, General George Casey, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued, strong support and demonstrated commitment to our Soldiers, Army Civilians, and Family members.

As all of you know, it has been a busy time for our Nation's military. We have been at war for the past seven-plus years, which has undeniably put a strain on our people and equipment. We have had our share of good and bad experiences; and, we are continually making adjustments and improvements to our tactics, training, and equipment based upon lessons learned.

However, since the very beginning, this war has been in many ways different and more complex than past wars. We are dealing with less clearly defined and highly savvy adversaries in two theaters. In order to remain dominant, we have had to simultaneously and swiftly adapt our doctrine and organizational structure to effectively span the breadth of operational environments. It's all part of a changing strategy we refer to in the Army as "*Full Spectrum Operations.*"

Unlike the Army of previous generations – that had essentially a single mission focus of ground warfare – today’s Force has many more specialized capabilities and a much broader mission span. The centerpiece of our efforts is a shift to a modular construct focused at the brigade level, thus creating a more deployable, adaptable, and versatile force. By the end of fiscal year 2009, the Army will have transformed 87 percent of our units to modular formations – the largest organizational change since World War II. We have also widely expanded our capability by adding Civil Affairs, Military Police, Special Forces, and others.

This ongoing transformation has greatly enhanced the Army’s ability to respond to any situation, quickly and effectively. However, reaching this point has not been easy, particularly for a tired and stretched Force. And, the degree of impact continues to vary, for example, between Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), “enablers,” the Reserve Components, and individual Soldiers.

The 15 combat brigades in theater understandably get the bulk of the attention, but when you look across the total Army today, the number of brigades committed is actually much higher. We have six National Guard brigades assigned to Security Forces; one brigade in Korea; one in Kosovo Force (KFOR); one committed to the Transition Team Mission; one serving as the Global Response Force; one tied up as the CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-yield explosive) Consequence Management Response Force or CCMRF; two tied up in Relief in Place/Transition of Authority (RIP/TOA), the approximately 40-day period when the incoming/outgoing units are either enroute to/from theater or on-site conducting battle hand-off; and, one battalion serving in the Sinai.

Additionally, among all the components, there are approximately 30,000+ Soldiers that are currently unavailable (~9,200 are assigned to Warrior Transition Units (WTUs); ~2,300 are assigned as cadre or health care providers at WTUs; ~10,000 are non-deployable (i.e., dwell, injury, pregnancy); and ~10,000 are assigned as individual augmentees).

Also, while we built BCTs to be self-sufficient, in reality there is still a relatively robust support system that augments them – as well as the other Services, our coalition partners, and host nation forces – in the environments we fight in today. These “enablers” include engineer, intelligence, fires, logistics, military police, civil affairs, and aviation. The demand on “enablers” is expected to grow even larger in Afghanistan, a country without the infrastructure and logistical capability that already existed in Iraq in 2003. The overall demand will also be further exacerbated by the continued necessity for a large number of “enablers” in Iraq, even as units drawdown to meet the President’s guidance from February 27, 2009.

Other capabilities have also been created out of hide in response to new requirements or because the appropriate government agencies have either been unable or unwilling to provide these critical functions – civil affairs officers, contract specialists, and health advisors are good examples.

A case in point is Afghanistan, where National Guard AgriBusiness Development teams – made up of Farmer-Soldiers from 8 states in Middle America – are teaching Afghans how to improve their farming methods in order to yield more crops and livestock. Agriculture accounts for 60-70% of that country’s economy; however, the “how-to” knowledge that historically was passed down from generation to generation has been lost after years of civil war and tribal fighting.

This non-kinetic piece is critically important, and these Farmer-Soldiers are doing an outstanding job. However, the fact is they do not exist on the National Guard's Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E), and the manning shortfalls they create must then be backfilled from somewhere else.

One possible solution would be for teams of agronomists from land grant universities sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to take on this particular mission. In their absence, the Army has had to provide these and other specialized teams.

Over the past seven-plus years, demand has continued to grow and the Army's level of responsibility has expanded considerably. At the same time our available Force structure has become smaller as the number of non-deployables has increased. The combined effect has been increased deployments and shorter dwell times for our Soldiers. The Army is currently averaging a 1:1.3 ratio (12 months deployed and 16 months dwell) for our Active Component and less than a 1:3 ratio for Reserve Component forces.

People tend to focus on unit dwell time, while failing to appreciate that frequently a Soldier will redeploy with one unit, go to school en route to his next assignment, then have to deploy with the new unit in less than 12 months. The United States Military Academy's Operations Research Center and the Army G-1 recently completed a very detailed analysis of unit and individual "Boots on the Ground" (BOG)/dwell times. The study analyzed the 11 Series Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) grades, concluding that for every MOS and grade (rank), more than 50% of the Soldiers experience shorter dwell time compared to the BCTs.

The current pace of operations is impacting every segment of our Force – Active, Guard, and Reserve. And, while our Reserve Components are continuing to perform magnificently, many of these units have been assigned missions as an operational force, when they had been resourced and utilized as a strategic reserve for decades.

Another challenge we are still dealing with is the impact of the Surge. We are not scheduled to get our last combat brigade off of a 15-month deployment until June 2009 and our last CS/CSS unit off of 15-month deployment until September 2009.

As we have previously reported to this committee, the Army remains out of balance. We continue to be consumed by the demands of the current fight; and, we are consuming our readiness as fast as we are building it. Soldiers, Families, support systems, and equipment are stretched and stressed by the strain of multiple, lengthy deployments, with insufficient recovery time. Equipment used repeatedly in harsh environments is wearing out more rapidly than programmed. The maintenance activities and capacity at Army depots have increased to their highest levels in 35 years.

This lack of balance poses a significant risk to the All Volunteer Force, and it limits our flexibility to provide ready forces as rapidly as we would like for other contingencies.

Two years ago, the Chief, General Casey outlined a plan to restore balance to the Force and set conditions for the future. The plan included four imperatives: sustain, prepare, reset, and transform. Since then, we have made definitive progress in each of these areas; however, there is still much work to be done. Looking ahead, the Army must continue to modernize, adapt our institutions, and transform Soldier and leader

development. We must ensure we have a trained and ready Force that is well-prepared, expeditionary, versatile, lethal, sustainable, and able to adapt to any situation.

The challenge continues to be complicated by changing circumstances and increased demand on the Force. We simply cannot achieve desired BOG/dwell ratios until demand is reduced to a sustainable level.

Unfortunately, the Army cannot influence demand, and the current level does not appear likely to improve significantly for the foreseeable future. So, the choice we are faced with is to continue to over-extend some of the lower-density MOSs or create additional capability. We are currently staffing many of the critical functions by reassigning authorizations and personnel from within our ranks. My concern is that we cannot fully predict what the derivative effects of this will be in the future.

The Army is expecting to gain some savings over the next couple of years as the last of the units deployed for 15 months as part of the Surge return in September 2009, and as we begin the drawdown of forces in Iraq in 2010. If executed as planned, these reductions in demand will help to increase dwell times for many of our Soldiers. However, if these plans are delayed or postponed due to unforeseen events or a resurgence of tensions in 'hot spots' around the world, we will have to find other ways to relieve the stress on the Force. Simply put, we must be prepared for the very real possibility of – what I refer to as – *“persistent engagement.”*

These continue to be challenging times for our Nation and for our military. With the support of Congress, we have deployed the best manned, equipped, trained, and led forces in the history of the United States Army over the past seven-plus years. However, the fact remains that we have asked a great deal from our Soldiers and their Families.

Unfortunately, the prolonged strain is already manifesting itself in an increased number of Soldiers struggling with substance abuse and mental or behavioral health issues, such as depression, post-traumatic stress, and other types of anxiety disorders, as well as an increase in the number of suicides across the Force.

We must continue to address these and other urgent problems, and find ways to relieve some of the stress on the Force by increasing dwell time between deployments.

I assure the members of this committee – the Army’s senior leaders are focused and working hard to address these challenges and to determine the needs of the Force for the future. We remain dedicated to improving the quality of life of our Soldiers, Army Civilians, and Families. In particular, we are committed to providing the best care and support to our wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers and their Families. As we continue this process, we will coordinate with senior DoD officials and Congress to identify both short- and long-term solutions. Your input will continue to be very valuable to us.

Chairman, members of the committee, I thank you again for your continued and generous support of the outstanding men and women of the United States Army and their Families. I look forward to your questions.